

Message Text

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R 121800Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5412

INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 31754

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, FR

SUBJECT: CANARD ENCAINE SCANDAL

1. SUMMARY. LATEST FRENCH POLITICAL SCANDAL, ONE WITH GREAT POTENTIAL TO EMBARRASS HIGHEST LEVELS OF GOF, IS POSED BY THE DISCOVERY IN THE EDITORIAL OFFCES OF THE FRENCH SATIRICAL, MUCKRAKING JOURNAL LE CANARD ENCHAINE OF AN ATTEMPT TO INSTALL A SYSTEM OF MICROPHONES. WHILE IT NOT YET CLEAR WHO SENT THE WORKERS "WHO WERE CAUGHT IN THE ACT,"IT INCREASINGLY BEING CHARGED THAT SENIOR GOF OFFICIALS WERE INVOLVED EITHER OFFICIALLY OR UNOFFICIALLY. END SUMMARY.

2. LE CANARD ENCHAINE IS A UNIQUE FRENCH INSTITUTION FOR MORE THAN 60 YEARS IT HAS MERCILESSLY SATIRIZED FRENCH POLITICALS, EXPOSING SCANDALS, ATTACKING POMPOSITY AND EXERTING INFLUENCE OUT OF ALL PROPORTION TO ITS LIMITED CIRCULATION. WRITTEN IN HIGHLY LITERARY FRENCH, FULL OF SUBTLE PUNS AND ALLUSIONS, IT IS REQUIRED READING FOR ALL WHO WISH TO FOLLOW FRENCH POLITICAL LIFE. IT PRESERVES ITS EDITORIAL FREEDOM BY ACCEPTING NO ADVERTISING AND IS RUN AS A COOPERATIVE.IT ATTACKS HUMBUG EVERYWHERE ON THE SPEC-
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TRUM OF FRENCH POLITICS.

3. LAST WEEK A MEMBER OF ITS STAFF DISCOVERED A GROUP OF MEN IN THE PROCESS OF MAKING A CLANDESTINE INSTALLATION OF WHAT APPEARS TO BE A SYSTEM OF MICROPHONES. LE CANARD HAS BROUGHT SUIT "AGAINST PERSONS UNKNOWN" AND THE FRENCH JUDICIARY IS NOW INVESTIGATING. THERE APPEARS NO DOUBT THAT A SOPHISTICATED SYSTEM OF MICROPHONES WAS INDEED BEING INSTALLED IN THE CANARD'S OFFICE.

4. FRENCH NEWSPAPERS, EVEN SOME NOT USUALLY HOSTILE TO THE GOVERNMENT, AND DEPUTIES, INCLUDING MANY BELONGING TO THE MAJORITY PARTIES IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, HAVE GREETED THIS AFFAIR WITH GREAT DEAL OF CONCERN, AND ACCORDED IT MUCH PUBLICITY

5. INTERIOR MINISTER MARCELLIN HAS FIRMLY AND EXPLICITLY DENIED HIS OWN PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN THIS AFFAIR AND ALSO THAT OF ALL OF THE VARIOUS POLICE SERVICES UNDER HIS ADMINISTRATION. NEVERTHELESS MARCELLIN'S USUALLY LONG (2 12 HOUR) MEETING MONDAY NIGHT WITH PRESIDENT

POMPIDOU HAS NOT GONE UNREMARKED. WHEN THE SCANDAL BROKE, CERTAIN GOVERNMENT POLITICIANS SUGGESTED THAT THE WHOLE AFFAIR WAS A PUBLIC RELATIONS GIMMICK BY THE CANARD TO INCREASE ITS CIRCULATION. THIS THESIS IS NO LONGER HELD. AT PRESENT, THE LIKELY EXPLANATIONS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING: (A) THAT ONE OR ANOTHER OF THE FRENCH POLICE FORCES WAS DIRECTED BY SENIOR LEVEL OFFICIALS TO UNDERTAKE THIS INSTALLATION. THIS WEEK THE CANARD ACCUSED THE DST--THE COUNTER-ESPIONAGE SERVICE--AND NAMED THE OFFICIALS ALLEGEDLY RESPONSIBLE. (B) THAT ONE OR ANOTHER OF THE POLICE SERVICES MADE THIS EFFORT WITHOUT HAVING INFORMED THE POLITICAL LEVEL. OR (C) THAT THE ATTEMPT WAS MADE BY THE "POLICE PARALLELE", UNOFFICIAL CLANDESTINE GROUPS FINANCED BY RIGHT-WINGERS WHICH ARE REPORTED TO HAVE UNDERTAKEN OPERATIONS FOR GAULLIST POLITICIANS WHICH WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR OFFICIAL SERVICES.

6. THAT THE TELEPHONES OF FRENCH POLITICAL LEADERS ARE TAPPED HAS LONG BEEN AN OPEN SECRET. THIS WAS THE SUBJECT OF A FUTILE ATTEMPT AT AN INVESTIGATION BY MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY THIS FALL. WHOEVER WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ATTEMPT TO BUG THE CANARD OFFICES, IT WAS A PECULIARLY UNFORTUNATE CHOICE OF TARGET, SINCE THE CANARD CAN BE RELIED UPON TO INVESTIGATE TENACIOUSLY

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WHOEVER WAS RESPONSIBLE AND TO "PUBLISH AND BE DAMNED." IT IS CLEAR THAT THE AFFAIR IS A LONG WAY FROM ITS CONCLUSION. WHILE IT IS TOO EARLY TO SPEAK OF RESIGNATIONS, THE GOVERNMENT WILL FIND IT DIFFICULT TO SUPPRESS THIS SCANDAL.

STONE

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